

# Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

1040 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10018 • (212) 398-1140

## NEWS RELEASE

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For further information:  
Richard T. Anderson  
Executive Vice President  
Regional Plan Association  
(212) 398-1140 (Office)  
(914) 738-5160 (Home)

Fred I. Kent III  
President  
Project for Public Spaces  
(212) 620-5660 (Office)

FOR RELEASE: October 16, 1985, 6:00 P.M.

### NEW PROMENADE FOR TIMES SQUARE PROPOSED

Regional Plan Association and the Project for Public Spaces invite all media to a sidewalk press conference and walking tour of a proposed Times Square promenade.

Time: Wednesday, October 16 at 1:30 p.m.  
Place: just north of Armed Forces Recruiting kiosk,  
7th Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets  
Note: This conference should provide an unusually good opportunity for television crews--to analyze "the heart of New York"--its problems and opportunities for renewal.

Regional Plan and Project for Public Spaces propose:

--That new construction planned or underway in Times Square will require sidewalk widening to accommodate pedestrian flow which will increase up to 50 percent throughout the Times Square area;

--Sidewalk widening and landscaping can be accomplished without significantly reducing flow of traffic through Times Square; that is because the amount of traffic which can enter Times Square is effectively limited by the 70-foot-wide neck at 45th Street. Unnecessary right of way is now reserved for auto traffic and that space ought to be returned to the pedestrian who will benefit most;

--The area around the Times Tower should be developed to open up subway platforms down below to light and air; by exposing the complexities of the Times Square subway nexus to the street level, an area which is dark, dingy and unsafe can become most agreeable and lively from above and below.

The Regional Plan Association and Project for Public Spaces urge the City Planning Commission in its current Times Square planning effort to make the new Times Square safer by making it more interesting and desirable for the pedestrian and subway rider.

The Times Square promenade proposal was drafted by the Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit research organization which has assisted more than 60 cities and towns in developing ways to improve their public spaces, and Regional Plan Association--a private non-profit agency devoted to the coordinated development of the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut metropolitan area. The Times Square study was based on pioneering Regional Plan research on pedestrian space needs completed in 1975.

Detailed statement attached.

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October 4, 1985

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FOR RELEASE ON  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1985  
6:00 P.M.

A PROPOSAL FOR A TIMES SQUARE PROMENADE

October 1985

Project for Public Spaces, Inc.  
153 Waverly Place  
New York, New York 10014

Regional Plan Association  
1040 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10038

The 42nd Street Development Project, approved by the New York City Board of Estimate last November, will have substantial ramifications for adjacent areas of Midtown Manhattan. For this reason, a number of civic groups urged the City Planning Commission to focus on comprehensive planning for the entire "greater Times Square area" from 40th to 48th Streets at the same time implementation of the 42nd Street Project proceeds.

This recommendation was accepted by the Board of Estimate as part of the 42nd Street resolution. It calls on the Department of City Planning to prepare a comprehensive urban design plan for Times Square, including a streetscape program, improved signage and lighting, consideration of zoning changes, and attention to both vehicular and pedestrian needs.

Project for Public Spaces and Regional Plan Association believe that a cleaned-up Times Square will be one of the most popular pedestrian spaces in the world, and it will require serious attention to the proper allocation of space for those who walk and those who drive.

#### Reasons for Times Square Promenade Proposal

The 42nd Street Development Project will roughly quadruple the building floorspace on its 13-acre site, increasing pedestrian flows on the order of 50 percent. Some of that increase will be accommodated by improved sidewalk and subway circulation on the site and by a five-foot setback recently proposed for the Seventh Avenue frontage by the developers of Times Square Center office project. But increased pedestrian flows will spill over beyond the site throughout the adjacent area: half of walking trips in Midtown are longer than 1,000 feet. Pedestrian movement in many adjacent areas already is congested and/or on the verge of congestion (defined by Regional Plan as four people per foot of unobstructed sidewalk width per minute on the average during a peak hour). Thus, sidewalk widening and reconfiguration must extend beyond the legal boundaries of the project itself--especially northward into the full extent of Times Square.

The issue is not only functional but design-related. Times Square was never designed as an urban space. It simply "happened" at an awkward intersection of two roadways where left-over space was given to pedestrians. In the block between 43rd and 44th Streets, as an example, 9,500 pedestrians an hour on an average midday are crowded into 40 feet of sidewalk alongside the building lines, while 120 feet in the middle is used by some 4,500 people in cars, buses, taxis and trucks. In other words, two-thirds of the users are crowded into one-quarter of the space; conditions are even worse on Saturday.

The attention being paid to the design of these buildings is not being matched by attention to the crowded street conditions which these buildings will produce. A "world-class" project requires "world-class" surroundings. Both a design concept and a circulation concept should be developed for greater Times Square as part of the Department of City Planning's new planning program for the area from 40th to 48th Streets alongside Broadway and Seventh Avenue. This requires not just new signage, lighting and pavement and a relocation of sidewalk obstructions, such as newspaper stands, but a basic reallocation of vehicular and pedestrian space.

#### Why a Times Square Promenade?

Past proposals for improving pedestrian space in the Times Square area, including the Broadway Plaza in front of the new Marriott-Marquis hotel, have gone nowhere--partly because of fears that a large pedestrian plaza would attract loiterers and disrupt travel by taxis and other vehicles. Regional Plan Association and Project for Public Spaces are advancing an alternate proposal--a Times Square Promenade--the key to which is greatly expanded sidewalk space along the east and west sides of the Broadway-Seventh Avenue space, an expanded pedestrian island at Duffy Square, and the possibility of a grand open space at the Times Tower site, with an opening admitting light and air to the subway mezzanine. A map of the proposal is attached.

The premises of the concept are threefold:

1. Greater Times Square basically functions as a promenade, not as a square. Adequate space must be provided for the free and dignified movement of the 200,000 pedestrians moving north and south through Times Square.
2. Vehicular southbound movement through the area is limited by the 70-foot roadway width at the intersection with 45th Street. Both north and south of this bottleneck, there is redundant vehicular space which can be turned over to pedestrians without interrupting the continuity of southbound vehicular travel.
3. The isolated islands in the middle are of little use to pedestrians and should be devoted to ornamental purposes. The exception is Duffy Square, where pedestrian amenities around the discount ticket booth can be greatly improved.

The Times Square Promenade proposal suggests that the easternmost and the westernmost sidewalks along Broadway-Seventh Avenue be widened from the existing 20 feet to 30 feet, all at the expense of redundant vehicular pavement. Where there are setbacks, the sidewalks might become as wide as 35 feet--similar to the sidewalk in front of Penn Station. At 45th Street, where no extra room is available, the sidewalks can be tapered down to the present width. A total of 70 to 90 feet of vehicular roadway is maintained throughout the area. To reduce vehicular demand, the Central Park drive into Seventh Avenue could be permanently closed at 59th Street, and the new design for Columbus Circle could steer unnecessary vehicular movement away from that area.

Unlike the ill-fated Broadway Plaza, the Times Square Promenade:

1. Does not disrupt the continuity of traffic (and taxi) flow on Broadway;
2. Does not create an enclave of open space where undesireables can congregate, instead providing a wider channel that is filled with moving pedestrians;
3. Will not be as difficult to implement, because substantial capital construction is not required. Nonetheless, sidewalk widening will require relocation of catch basins and similar work and could possibly require an environmental impact statement. This needs further exploration.

Status of the Proposal

The Times Square Promenade concept has been proposed to Herbert Sturz, Chairman of the New York City Planning Commission, and is being considered by New York City Planning Department staff and consultants responsible for the Times Square planning effort. A Times Square Advisory Council has been formed to oversee the work, chaired by Mr. Sturz and including a wide range of the City's business and civic leadership. The Council has discussed the Promenade proposal. In addition, Regional Plan and Project for Public Spaces have reviewed the idea with the Presidents' Council, an informal coalition of civic groups concerned with planning and design that has taken an active interest in overall planning for the 42nd Street/Times Square area.

Regional Plan Association and Project for Public Spaces

Project for Public Spaces is a non-profit corporation dedicated to improving the quality of life in urban public spaces in cities and towns throughout America. PPS was founded to implement ideas of urban sociologist William H. Whyte. PPS has now completed major public space improvement projects in over 60 North American cities and towns.

Regional Plan Association was founded in 1929 to implement the Regional Plan of New York and its Environs and to encourage planning throughout the Tri-State metropolitan area. Its comprehensive planning program has included extensive work on urban design and pedestrian space, including the pioneering Urban Space for Pedestrians, written by Boris S. Pushkarev, Vice President for Research and Planning, and published by The MIT Press in 1975.

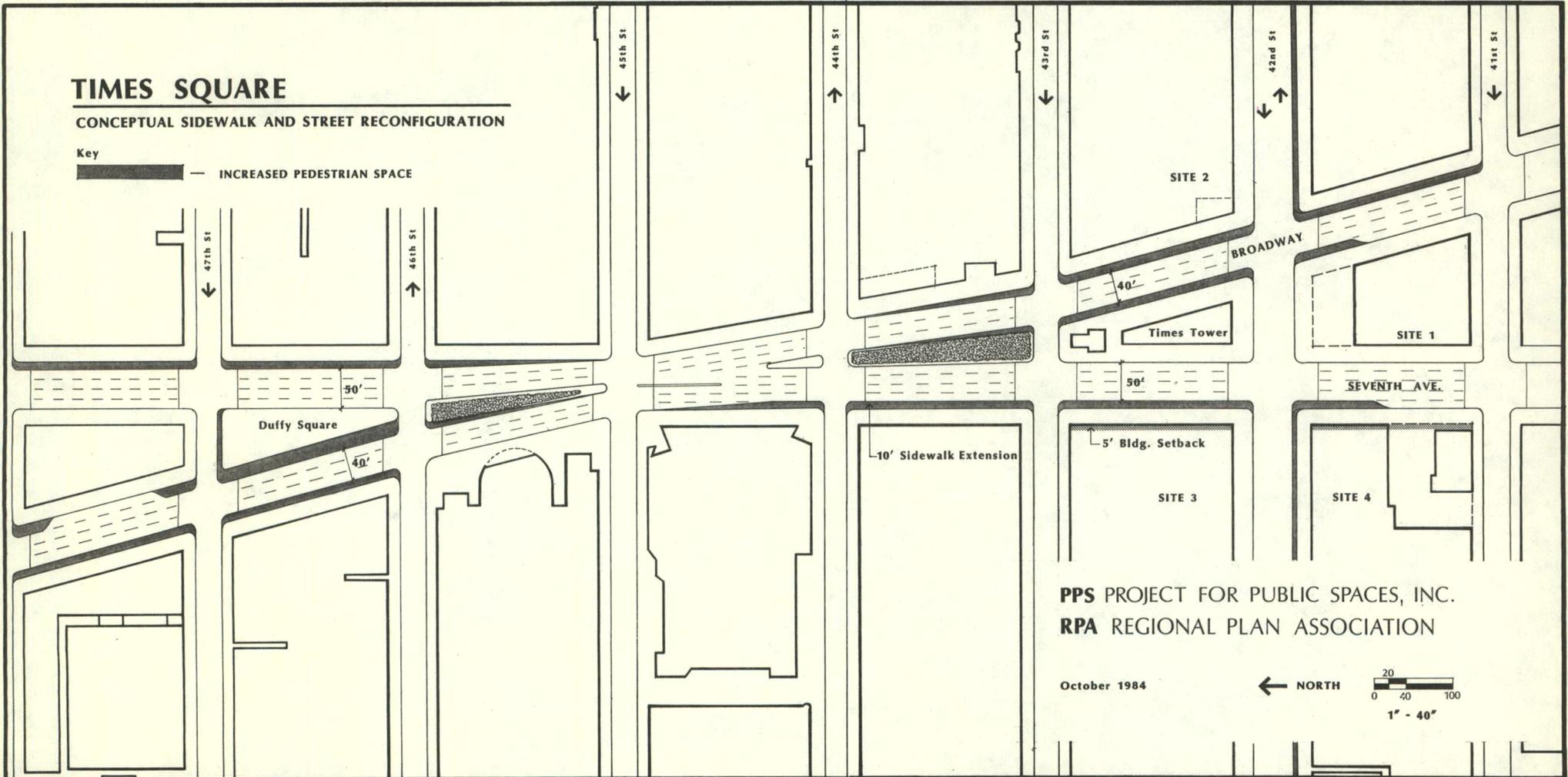
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# TIMES SQUARE

## CONCEPTUAL SIDEWALK AND STREET RECONFIGURATION

Key

— INCREASED PEDESTRIAN SPACE



PPS PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES, INC.

RPA REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION

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← NORTH

